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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023

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Go from Mailbox to Inbox with Paperless Billing

The new year is a great time to start a new routine. We suggest you switch to West Central Telephone's paperless billing, which means you'll receive your statements via email rather than "snail mail."

With paperless billing, you'll have one less bill in your mailbox each month and less clutter on your kitchen counter. Plus, you'll help us use less paper and save some trees.

To sign up for paperless billing through our SmartHub system, visit <https://wcta.smarthub.coop/Login.html#registration>.

If you have questions, call us at 218-837-5151.



Like to Join the Nominations & Election Committee?

As a member of West Central Telephone, you're eligible to serve on the Nominations & Election Committee. Members of the committee are responsible for:

- Appointing qualified candidates to run for directorship
- Collecting ballots
- Verifying election results at the annual meeting held in May

If you're interested in serving as a committee member, please call us at 218-837-5151 before January 16.

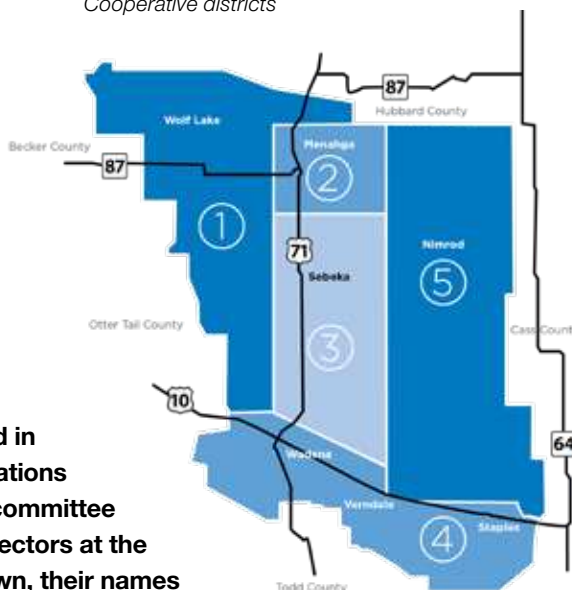


Annual Meeting Date and Board Election Announcement

The 73rd Annual Meeting of the Members of WCTA is scheduled for May 8 at the Sebeka High School gymnasium. While the full agenda isn't yet known, elections for two directors will take place. Members will cast their ballots for representation from District 1, currently held by Harvey Aho; and District 4, formerly held by Dale Schmith, who passed away November 15, 2022.

If you're interested in learning more about running for the seat on the board in either district, please contact a Nominations & Elections Committee member. This committee is appointed by the WCTA Board of Directors at the January board meeting, and once known, their names will be published.

Cooperative districts





Contest Winners Announced

Kay Kreklau of Sebeka submitted the winning photo featured on the cover of the 2023 WCTA Directory. Kay captured a striking image of one black cat on the fencepost surrounded by a white snowy blanket. Fun fact — Kay has submitted photos every year for the cover, and she was ecstatic to have finally had one of her photos chosen! She received \$200 for her winning entry.

In the annual WCTA Holiday Coloring Contest, five fabulous artists placed first in their age division. The winners were Natalie Makela, Claire Aho, Hannah Skaro, Isabella Cardenas and Tia Keranen. Each of the winners were awarded a \$50 Cozy Theater gift certificate and other prizes. Congratulations to all and thank you for your participation!

News from West Central TV

Under the law, we are required to obtain permission to carry — or retransmit — local broadcast networks for a fee. Each year, we complete a negotiations process for retransmission of these broadcast networks. At the end of December, we completed the negotiation process for those broadcast networks whose terms expired December 31, 2022. The rate increases that the networks imposed for carriage of their channels resulted in an increase of your Broadcast TV Surcharge on your January bill. This is a direct result of rate increases from the broadcast networks. To learn more about broadcast retransmission fees, and skyrocketing programming fees, visit <https://tvonmyside.com/west-central-telephone>.

In September, NBCU dropped The Olympic Channel, which was in the Complete TV and the Ultimate lineups. KARE added Quest, Twist and Circle to the Minneapolis Core lineups. The former TVG2 channel has been rebranded as FanDuel Racing and expanded its sports-betting event coverage beyond horseracing, although that's still a huge part of their platform. Speaking of horses, The Cowboy Channel, which features the Nationals Finals Rodeo, was added to the Entertainment and People's Choice lineups. Since we get asked this so often, YES, WE DO CARRY PARAMOUNT! You'll find it on the Complete TV lineup.

If you haven't yet signed up for watchTVEverywhere, visit www.wtve.net and register with your account number and the last name on your billing statement. Once registered, you can download apps to any smart device and watch TV whether you're home or at the gym. You're allowed up to four watchTVEverywhere accounts.

Be sure to follow local sports, programs and other school events on the school channels. Each school provides its own content, and the channels are available to all TV subscribers: Sebeka Trojans on 900, Menahga High School on 901 and Verndale High School on 902.

For the current channel lineup, visit www.wcta.net.



BMF

**Premieres 1/6 @ 8pm
New Episodes Fridays**

STARZ

"BMF" follows the story of two brothers who created the "Black Mafia Family," the most prominent drug distribution network in American history.

STARZ® and related channels and service marks are property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. BMF © MMXXI Lions Gate Television Inc. All rights reserved.

Scholarship Opportunities

As an investment in our youth, West Central Telephone is committed to the future of rural Minnesota. We're pleased to announce these scholarship opportunities and invite all high school seniors to apply.

FRS College Scholarship Program

The FRS College Scholarship program provides \$2,000 and the sponsoring NTCA member company provides \$500 for a total of \$2,500. In addition to the FRS general scholarships, FRS has the following named scholarships:*

- JSI Scholarships
- Everett Kneece Scholarship
- Sarah Tyree Good Neighbor Scholarship
- Herbert and Isabel Bitz Memorial Scholarship
- Diana Jo Meyer Memorial Scholarship

**Submitting one application is sufficient for eligibility of all available scholarships. Scholarship applications are completed online and must be submitted no later than February 8, 2023. For applications and guidelines, see your high school guidance counselor or visit <https://www.frs.org/programs/youth-programs/scholarships>.*



WCTA Scholarship Program

High school seniors whose parents are cooperative members are encouraged to apply for one of eight scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each. The application deadline is March 31, 2023. Our cooperative status allows us to fund our scholarship program in part through unclaimed capital credits.

Minnesota Telecom Alliance Foundation Scholarships

The MTA Foundation will award six scholarships to high school seniors graduating in 2023. Each scholarship will be in the amount of \$2,000. There are two types of scholarships this year:

- **One \$2,000 Telecom Scholarship:** To be eligible, applicants must be majoring in either Telecommunications or Information Technology (IT) at a university, college or technical college and be a Minnesota resident.
- **One of five \$2,000 General Scholarships:** To be eligible, applicants must be attending post-secondary education at a university, college or technical college and be a Minnesota resident. The applicant's family must subscribe to at least one service from an MTA member company.

Once completed, the application must be printed and submitted to WCTA by February 17, 2023.

2nd Year or Beyond Scholarship

Current college students are urged to apply for a \$1,000 scholarship through the 2nd Year or Beyond Scholarship. Students are eligible if they graduated from high school, are from any of the telephone exchanges of WCTA and are currently attending 2nd year or beyond higher education. **Past scholarship winners are also eligible.** The application deadline is May 26, 2023.

Links to all scholarships are found on www.wcta.net under the Scholarships tab.

Enjoy Maximum Entertainment with HBOmax

Current HBO subscribers have access to HBO Max — an entertainment experience like no other! With the HBO Max app, you can stream everything you know and love on HBO plus additional shows and movies. The best part is this: HBO Max is yours to enjoy at no additional charge with your current HBO subscription.

Here's how to get started with HBO Max:

- Download the HBO Max App or visit play.hbomax.com/login from your browser.
- Click "Sign In" (browser) or click the "Person" icon (app).
- Tap "Already Subscribed? Sign In."
- Choose "Sign In through a TV or mobile provider."
- Select your TV or mobile provider from the alphabetized drop-down menu.
- Sign in using your watchTVeverywhere account credentials.
- Set up profiles and start streaming.

Don't have HBO? Call us at 218-837-5151 today to add it.





BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT: Olson Ag

Olson Ag has been around for a long time, although you may know it by its former name, Olson's Custom Farm Services. Olson Ag is a 3rd-generation company. It was founded in 1930 by Melvin Olson when he started managing the Sebeka Pederson-Biddick store and remains family owned and operated.

Melvin's son Murlin purchased the business in 1974 and expanded it through acquisitions:

- In the early '80s, the Massey Ferguson equipment dealership was purchased from Ray Lillquist.
- In the early 2000s, Verndale Ag Services was purchased.
- In 2007, Schmitt Feed & Produce in Staples was purchased.

Murlin's son Mac Olson worked alongside his dad, and in 2007, Mac took over the business.

Olson Ag has locations in Sebeka, Verndale and Staples that serve farmers, ranchers and hobby farmers throughout central Minnesota. It offers a wide variety of ag-related products and services, which include (but are not limited to) feed, seed, fertilizer and chemical needs. The Sebeka location stocks many different supplies in the store and features a convenient drive-through

dome for loading up your supplies. The business also carries a full line of farm equipment parts and offers crop and livestock equipment for sale or rent. Being rural, Olson Ag tries to source their products locally whenever possible.

When asked what makes Olson Ag stand out, Mac said, "Working with our customers to get them what they need is the most rewarding part of my job. What makes us stand out is that extra mile we'll go to provide the best customer service."

Olson Ag relies on West Central Telephone for phone and internet services as well as a surveillance system so Mac and his team can keep an eye on the business even when they're not on location.

Olson Ag's main location is in Sebeka at 29238 US Hwy 71. For more information, you can call 218-837-5749, or visit www.olsonscustomfarmservices.com. Follow them on Facebook at Olson Ag.

Call West Central Telephone at 218-837-5151 to learn how our services can help your business.

Welcome New Members

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Bachner Foote, Caleb..... | 218-414-6140 | Hill, Eric | 218-837-6705 | Pederson, Glenn..... | 218-472-6332 |
| Blake, Jody | 218-837-5291 | Hrdlicka, Maggie..... | 218-564-2154 | Skoog, E | 218-564-9344 |
| Coffey, Jared | 218-445-5377 | Hvh Certified Accountants | 218-732-7629 | Tumberg, Marc & Kiersten | 218-564-5978 |
| Crow Wing Underground Inc ... | 218-414-6512 | Kinnunen, Kimberli..... | 218-564-3854 | Wadena County | |
| Demars, Mike & Stacy | 218-414-6462 | License Bureau..... | 218-631-3623 | Humane Society | 218-632-5938 |
| Down Home Foods LLC..... | 218-631-2323 | Miller, Jacob & Debbie | 218-631-3458 | | |
| Eckman, Carroll..... | 218-629-1903 | Olsson, Vivi-Anne | 218-414-6107 | | |